

leader after lunch what other amendments we would hope to have an opportunity to vote on. I share his view that we ought to wrap this bill up as soon as reasonably possible. We will be working toward that end throughout the day.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the first half of the time under the control of the minority and the second half of the time under the control of the majority. The Senator from Kansas.

IRAQ

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I thank the leaders for the time this morning.

I recently returned from a trip looking into what is taking place in the war on terrorism. I was in Afghanistan in Kabul and also went to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, had a brief meeting in Pakistan with our Ambassador and military leadership in Pakistan and also in Kuwait. I then went from there to Iraq. I was in Baghdad for a period of 24 hours plus. I went to Irbil in northern Iraq in the Kurdish region, met with Barzani, head of the Kurdish region, and traveled to Ethiopia to the current front, the expanded front in the war on terrorism, saw what the Ethiopians are doing in Somalia. I met with the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, about what he is doing in Somalia. I had a very good meeting with him and also with our military commanders in that region, with the recent strikes we have done against terrorism in southern Somalia and work we have done with the Ethiopians.

All of this was very informative. There is a mixture of news to report as to what is taking place in the war on terrorism. There are some very positive things happening, particularly the recent events in Somalia, what the Ethiopians are pushing for, and some very positive things happening in Afghanistan, some difficulties we are still having with Pakistani leadership going after some of the threats on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Northern Iraq is booming, the Kurdish area. Investment is flowing. There are cranes and people are building. Baghdad is in great difficulty.

I, also, wish to talk about my suggestions for the route forward. I think the President, in his address, was saying he is proposing a route forward, and if others might oppose or have a different view, all I ask is that you put forward a proposal yourself. That is fair. That is what we ought to do. We are all in this, and we need to see the route forward.

There is good news in Iraq, certainly. We have 140,000 of America's best and

brightest working hard every day. I flew on troop transport planes in and out of various places with the troops and met and visited with them along the way. They are impressive. Their dedication and courage and commitment is impressive to feel. It is inspiring. It is inspiring to see. I have a niece and nephew who have signed up to join the Marines. So they are going into this as well. I am proud of them, as is the whole family.

The irrepressible spirit of our soldiers—from new recruits to veterans of multiple—is inspiring. I even saw a father-son team from Kansas in Kuwait. They are enthusiastic, determined, and we depend on them for the success we will achieve in Iraq. I know firsthand it is not just a good sound bite to say we have the best Armed Forces in the world. There is simply no other place in the world that can boast of so many courageous, committed, and talented volunteers so willing to make sacrifices, whenever the country calls upon them. They continue to deserve our great respect and admiration for performing so ably under such difficult circumstances. And the circumstances are that.

Baghdad still feels similar to an occupation zone. I was physically present in Baghdad for about 24 hours. It is hard to say that I saw the city. I left with an enduring image of concrete barriers and convoys of SUVs. I last visited Baghdad in March 2005. The environment is no better than it was at that period of time. Three mortar rounds exploded in the green zone while I was there meeting with the Iraqi Vice President. No one was harmed. They were launched from somewhere way out, but still they hit. It shows how insecure the city remains.

We all wish the situation would get better, but I am particularly disappointed. I have had a long-term interest in Iraq. When I first came to the Senate in 1996, I served on the Foreign Relations Committee and chaired the Middle East Subcommittee that held some of the first hearings on what to do about Saddam Hussein's regime. I carried the Iraq Liberation Act on the floor of the Senate that was signed into law by President Bill Clinton. I helped get the initial \$100 million for the Iraqi National Congress. I, also, attended the first INC meeting with Senator Bob Kerrey of Nebraska. We both went to New York City to meet with the opposition about what to do about Saddam Hussein. I, also, attended the first Iraqi National Congress meeting in London. I have been committed to a free, safe, and secure Iraq from the very beginning.

During my meetings last week, I found less reason for optimism. Sunni leaders blame everything on the Shia, and the Shia leaders likewise blame everything on the Sunnis. The Kurdish leadership pointed out that the Sunnis and Shia only meet when the Kurds call the meeting. All of this suggests

that, at the present time, the United States seems to care more about a peaceful Iraq than the Iraqis do. If that is the case, it is difficult to understand why more U.S. troops would make a difference.

One other bright spot was my visit to the northern part of the country, the Kurdish region. The security situation is stable and business is booming, as some number of people moving out of Iraq are moving into northern Iraq into the Kurdish region. The Kurds are demonstrating what is possible for the rest of Iraq when violence recedes. The Kurds are pragmatic. They are worried about committing Kurdish forces to Baghdad. I asked Brazani, would he commit Kurdish forces for the peace in Baghdad? He declined to do so. They don't want to get caught in the middle of a sectarian fight. If Iraqi Kurds feel this way, why should we feel any differently? Simply put, the Iraqis have to resolve these sectarian differences. We cannot do it for them.

This does not mean we should pull out of Iraq and leave behind a security vacuum or safe haven for terrorists. I do not support that alternative. It does mean that there must be a bipartisan agreement on our military commitment to Iraq. We cannot fight a war with the support of only one political party, and it does mean that the parties in Iraq—Sunni, Shia, and Kurds—must get to a political equilibrium. I think most people agree that a cut-and-run strategy does not serve our interests, nor those of the world, nor those of the region, nor those of the Iraqi people.

So I invite my colleagues all around, particularly on the other side of the aisle, to indicate what level of commitment they can support. We need to come together in Congress, and as a nation, on a strategy that will make real progress in Iraq and gain as much support as possible from the American people. Only a broadly supported, bipartisan strategy will allow us to remain in Iraq for the length of time necessary to ensure regional stability and to defeat the terrorists. That is our objective. Make no mistake, we may need to be in Iraq for some period of time, as we are in Bosnia, as we were in Europe, as we still remain in Korea. Iraqis should patrol their own streets, but we must continue to hunt down the terrorists. We must balance the aggressive moves by Iran, operating inside of Iraq, which seeks to exploit Iraq for its own gain.

These missions will take time to achieve on our part. It is vital we get a bipartisan way forward on Iraq as soon as possible. I invite people on the other side of the aisle to put forward their proposals. As we refine our military posture, we should also enlist the support of Iraq's neighbors, through a diplomatic initiative similar to the recommendations of the Baker-Hamilton Commission. Although I don't support all of those initiatives, I thought they had some good ideas, particularly engaging Iraq's neighbors. Each of Iraq's